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ABSTRACT

This document suggests a new 1-semester, 1-period secondary education course called "Community Opportunities: Volunteer and Leisure Education" to be located in the social studies department and incorporating proven practices from the vocational education department. The document provides the student objectives, instructional methods to be used, a rationale for the course, a schematic of main courses and extracurricular options, tasks to be undertaken for a 3- to 6-year model project, and 18 print and nonprint references. Among the objectives are that students will identify reasons for volunteering, make a volunteer service plan, explore opportunities in different community volunteer service agencies, assess their leisure interests, identify a new or dormant leisure interest, and write a plan for greater involvement in that leisure interest. Homework assignments could be community volunteer service. (CML)

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COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES: VOLUNTEER AND LEISURE EDUCATION

A concept paper
submitted by Martin Kimeldorf

After teaching students to "just say no" perhaps it is now time to focus our attention on what they can say "yes" to. In the process, we will help open up new vistas for personal growth by connecting students to school and community opportunities in volunteer and leisure education. These experiences will help students build confidence, self-esteem, career plans, and new relations with community members. It could result in increased student involvement in school learning opportunities (clubs, sports, service projects, vocational and arts classes) as well as increased community involvement (volunteer work, adult education, parks and recreation classes, clubs, etc).

I am suggesting that these goals could be reached through a new class, perhaps entitled "Community Opportunities: Volunteer and Leisure Education." It could be envisioned as a 1 semester, 1 period course in volunteer-service and leisure education. Though this course could be situated in the social studies department, it will incorporate proven practices from vocational (cooperative) education. As a result, it provides an excellent bridge between academic and vocational or experiential learning styles. Following this single-semester-exploratory class, students could elect to take a more intensive volunteer experience which would result in an individual placement as a volunteer in a local agency. In this individual placement the student earns an additional semester credit. The arrangements for this service experience would be similar to (vocational) cooperative education with support and back up by a coordinator.

This proposal will suggest a process that will include: research and development, field testing, and data collection. The goal is a curriculum that is ready-to-use, and easy-to replicate. The supporting data can be helpful in securing future funding for the purpose of adapting the program and expanding it. As a result, this proposal is couched in terms of a model-project scenario. What follows is an inventory of the course objectives, rational, and a proposed plan of work.

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PROPOSED COURSE OBJECTIVES

This two part course will develop positive attitudes about community service and leisure time. Students will study and come in contact with people and places which showcase opportunities in service and leisure learning. Those successfully completing the class will have an improved knowledge of their own interests and talents as well as a plan for future involvement.

Service Learning students will:

1. Identify reasons for volunteering
2. Identify different examples of how to volunteer one's talents and time in the community and school.
3. Make a volunteer service plan.
4. Explore opportunities in different community volunteer service agencies
5. Maintain a journal about their experiences.
6. Conduct research about social problems related to their volunteer experience and write a report.
7. Evaluate their volunteer experience
8. Be evaluated by their volunteer supervisor or recipient. Secure a letter of reference when warranted.

Leisure Education students will:

1. Assess their leisure interests, styles, wellness, and preferences
2. Identify a new or dormant leisure interest
2. Research (through networking and library research) possible individuals or places where one could become more involved in the identified leisure interest.
3. Conduct an informational interview with a person representing the leisure interest area.
4. Write a plan for greater involvement in the leisure interest area.

Possible Instructional methods

There are 6 possible methods of instruction to consider:

1. Completion of curriculum to be identified. This will serve as the backbone of the course and provide day-to-day assignments. Different curriculums might be identified for different level students such as talented and gifted, regular educatio, and special needs students.
2. Enrichment activities involving local resources: Guest speakers from school clubs, community agencies, hobbyists, etc.
3. Use video or sound media for projects and information.
4. Cooperative learning projects (related to research areas of the course or service projects).
5. Community experiences in the form of 10-30 hours of volunteer service, phone or in-person surveys, and informational interviews. These would be done on student time, similar to homework assignments. More in-depth involvement in service would be scheduled for credit in a manner similar to vocational cooperative placements (during a 7th period or during school, when feasible).

Staffing

The best staffing model would involve team teaching (half time coordinator/teacher and full time teacher). This would insure that more than 1 teacher is available for future program expansion and provide the initial staff needed for community coordination work and report writing. If the project is funded on a model-project basis with needs for reporting and dissemination then clerical support would also be critical.

RATIONALE

The course anticipates future growth and interest in service and leisure education during the 1990s. This is supported by many recent changing social conditions. We can address some of these changes in society and education through service and leisure education. Some supporting examples of this follow.

This model is pro-active for several reasons. First it anticipates the growing interest in (and subsequent legislation mandating) service education. Second, as the nature of work changes and results in a plethora of routine service jobs, many youth may find that work pays a wage but does not challenge them or offer them a chance to use their talents to their fullest. As a result, many citizens will want to explore leisure and service opportunities as they search for a sense of belonging, fulfillment, or contribution in their lives. Secondly, some reports suggest that families continue to evolve and become increasingly fragile. Consequently, there may be less time and resources to access traditional avenues for self-exploration (such as family outings, religious organizations, clubs and service organizations). Positive or negative influences can then fill the void. Service and leisure education is one option.

A school may realize many benefits from a service/leisure course. It integrates and strengthens many previous learning experiences while serving as a tool for nurturing and career development. A partial list of examples illustrates these and related benefits.

1. Career education and development is addressed through leisure and volunteer experiences. Several authors suggest that leisure interests are excellent indicators of vocational aptitudes and interests. Likewise, leisure is a "safe" way to explore new interests without the burden of rejection or competition. Thus, leisure exploration and assessment is an excellent foundation for vocational assessment and goal setting. In addition, assessing one's leisure style and preferences will help many people make better decisions about the kind of volunteer service that best matches their interests and aptitudes.

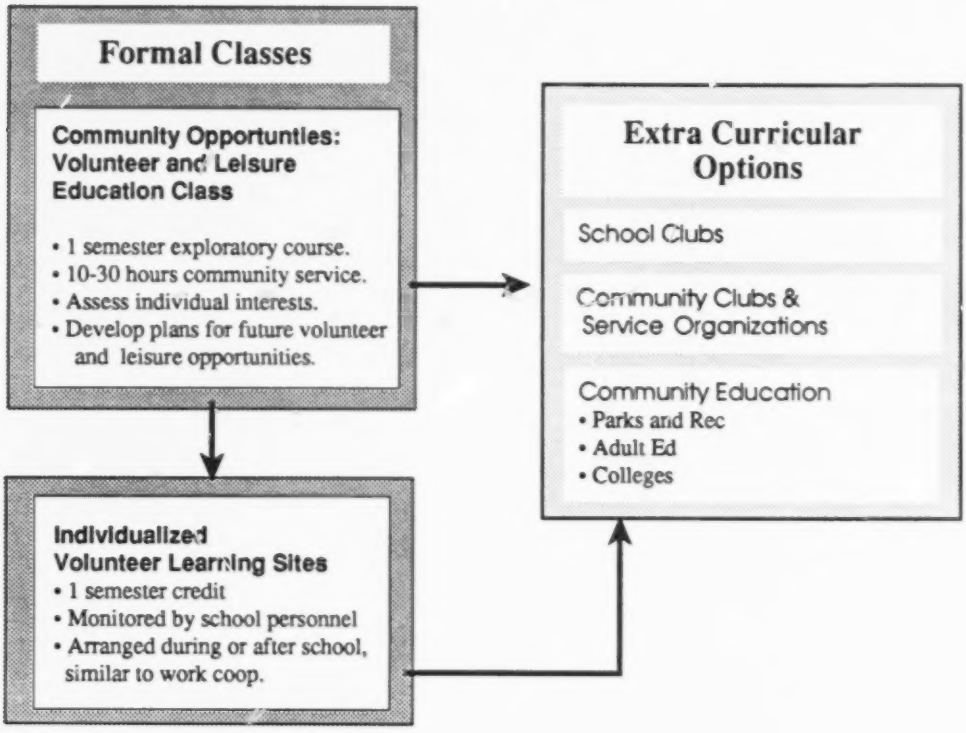
2. In this course the content of social studies focuses upon local issues, institutions and agencies. Traditionally, service learning experiments have either been taught in the Social Studies or English departments. Reading as a leisure activity is reinforced. Thus, academics skills are used or reinforced in this sort of course.

4. Vocational education's successful staffing and data collection system can be easily adapted to service education. Data is collected on student hours, monetary equivalent, preferred sites, etc.

5. Different student population needs can be addressed. In special education, community service would prepare students for the subsequent work experience programs. It would also help expand the places and peoples which can be explored in the community (which are currently limited to employment oriented sites). At-risk students have been successfully involved in cross-age tutoring, inter-generational projects, and community renovation work. Several schools have use community service classes with talented and gifted students (emphasizing literature, sociology). Many regular education students report a memorable experience because they felt valued for sharing their talents and time.

SCHEMATIC

A brief schematic showing the main courses and subsequent opportunities is shown next.


Formal Classes
Community Opportunities: Volunteer and Leisure Education Class
• 1 semester exploratory course.
• 10-30 hours community service.
• Assess individual interests.
• Develop plans for future volunteer and leisure opportunities.
Individualized Volunteer Learning Sites
• 1 semester credit
• Monitored by school personnel
• Arranged during or after school, similar to work coop.
Extra Curricular Options
School Clubs
Community Clubs & Service Organizations
Community Education
• Parks and Rec
• Adult Ed
• Colleges

PROPOSED PLAN OF WORK

In this section a general plan of work is illustrate for a 3-6 year model project. The first 3 years should result in a ready-to-use curriculum. The last 3 years result in expansion, dissemination, and adaptation to special populations or elementary schools. (A more detailed project action plan is available from the author).

Year 1—Design and Field Testing

Semester 1

Develop curriculum syllabus, staffing model, and volunteer work sites

Semester 2

Field test the model and curriculum, coordinate field site placements, and collect data on effort and effectiveness

Summer

Program revisions

Year 2—Expansion and Formal Data Collection

Semesters 1 and 2

Expand number of courses, collect and report on data, begin district-wide dissemination

Summer
Revision, expand curriculum, design teacher training, and identify new financial resources

Year 3—Expansion to special needs populations, evaluation, and reporting

Year 4—Statewide dissemination

Year 5—National dissemination

Year 6—Expansion to elementary schools

USEFUL REFERENCES

This is by no means a comprehensive list. However. it can serve as a starting point. Please suggest any other materials you'd like to see added.

Volunteer Service Organizations

- ACTION, 806, Connecticut's Ave, NW, Washington, DC, 20525. This is run by the federal government and organizes one the largest volunteer agencies, VISTA. They have lots of information about service projects you can do in your community.
- Campus Outreach Opportunity League, 180 18th St, NW,Washington, DC 2006. They publish a community service resource book for students in high school and colleges.
- Independent Sector, 1828 L St, NW, Washington, DC 20036. This organization represents many non-profit organizations and publishes a guide-book and support materials for youth-service programs.
- VOLUNTEER—The National Center, 1111 North 19th St, Arlington, VA 22209. This is a private non-profit group with lots of pamphlets about volunteer activities.
- National Society for Internship and Experiential Education (NSIEE), 3509 Haworth Dr, Suite 207, Raleigh, N.C. 27609. This society works with program and courses using all types of experiential education (primarily centered on post-secondary education).
- CASE: Early Adolescent Helper Program, Graduate Center, 25 West 43d St, NYC, NY 10036. This program develops materials for educators and service providers interested in community service for junior high and middle school aged children. They develop curriculum guides, videotapes, seminars and a newsletter.
- Youth Service America, 1319 F. St, N.W., Washington DC 20004. (202-783-8855)
- National Youth Leadership Council, 1910 W. Country Rd B. Roseville, MN 55113. (800-366--6952)

References for Volunteer, Service Education (see Volunteer Organizations)

Curriculum Guide and General References

Lend A Hand The how, where, and why of volunteering. Sara Gilbert. Morrow Junior Books, New York. 1988.This is not a workbook but it is an excellent and very readable book explaining why and how people volunteer. Incredible number of volunteer agencies are listed and a must resource for the teacher.

Enriching Learning Through Service. Kate McPherson. 1989. This short but useful manual illustrates not only the different ways service can be incorporated, but also the different ways volunteer service can be cross referenced to existing classes (art, social studies, Science, Math, English, P.E., etc) as well as clubs. The author suggests many ways for incorporating or infusing service education into the curriculum. (Copies available from the author at 2034 NE 104, Seattle, WA 98125).

Youth Service—A guidebook for Developing and Operating Effective Programs. Dan Conrad & Diane Hedin. 1986. This book provides practical information for person working to establish or improve youth

service programs. The ;authors describe how to set up and develop projects covering topics from transportation concerns and liability to helping young people evaluate and reflect upon their experience. (Copies: Independent Sector, 1828 L. Street, N. W. Washington D.C. 20036. (71 pages, $12.50).

Research

High School Community Service: A review of research and programs. Dan Conrad & Diane Hedin. December 1989. This paper summarizes ways schools have implemented service education, research about the impact of service learning, and national and state rules or policies covering this form of education. (Copies: National Center on Effective Secondary Schools, University of Wisconsin, 1025 Johnson St, Madison, WI 53706. Nominal fee covers the 37 page report).

Audio-Visual

All the Difference: Youth service in Minnesota. This documentary film produced in 1989 depicts how high school students are working to meet the needs of other people by working in social agencies, schools, and through special projects. Available for $19.95 from Minnesota Dept of Education, Youth Development Initiative Capitols Square Bldg, 550 Cedar Street, St. Paul, MN 55101.

Student Workbook (Also see Volunteer Organizations)

Working In Community Service— Volunteer service . Martin Kimeldorf. Educational Design Inc. NYC, NY. 1990. An introductory workbook teaching students about the benefits of community service and methods for choosing, finding, and evaluating a volunteer service opportunity.

Stopout! Working Ways To Learn. Joyce Mitchell. Garret Park Press. Garret Park, Maryland 20766. 2978. This interesting book has all kinds of ideas related to internships. It is billed as a directory of ideas for students who want to leave school for a year (hence "stop out" instead of "drop out"). Many of the notions in this book could translate into volunteer ideas.

Leisure References and Workbooks

Leisure Wellness. Forrest McDowell.Sun Moon Press. 1982. This is an innovative workbook focussing on leisure as a wellness tool. Lots of inventories and decision making guides.

Pathways To Leisure. Martin Kimeldorf. Meridian Educational Corp, 205 E. Locust St, Bloomington IL. 61701. 1988. This book teaches students how to identify their leisure interests and then how to find opportunities that match their leisure interests. The program re-uses the job search skills of networking, phone surveying, and goal setting to help students achieve a well round set of life-career goals.

Free Time Fun. Gary Huff & Virginia Tyler. Ednick Communications Inc. P.O. Box 3612, Portland OR 97208.
About low cost activities for developmentally disabled young adults and helpers. Lots of creative ideas for leisure with advice on social skills, appropriate community behaviors and transportation issues.

Questions or Updates??

**Send questions or requests for updates of this paper to the author at 6705 Gold Creek Dr. S.W., Tumwater, WA 98502. Please enclose a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope (SASE) for updates.*